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AUTHOR Dore, Roger M.
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ABSTRACT

A study compared test scores obtained by adult learners taught oral, written, and/or interpersonal communication skills by four different methods over two different lengths of time. The learners and those in a control group, which was not taught at all, were 171 bank employees. The teaching methods were executive coaching (one tutor and one learner), small group (1 teacher with 2-3 learners), computer-based training (CBT) (1 learner with a computer and instructional software), and classroom (1 teacher with 16 learners). Learners were further divided into 2 time blocks (10 hours of training or 20 hours of training) delivered at the rate of 1 hour per week. The Nelson-Denny Reading test and the Dailey Business English test were used pre- and post- training. Manova and post-hoc procedures indicated that the executive coaching methodology produced five scores significantly higher than the small group and classroom methodologies. One score was higher for the small group method over the classroom treatment. All results were at the .01 level of significance. No significant results were found for the CBT or classroom treatment groups. Results imply that, of the four teaching methods studied, the best one to use would be the executive coaching methodology. (YLB)

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF EXECUTIVE COACHING AS AN ALTERNATE ADULT TEACHING METHODOLOGY WITHIN A BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

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Running Head: Executive Coaching in Business

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Abstract

This study set out to discover how the individual tutoring methodology-Executive Coaching-would compare to Small Group, Computer Based Training and Classroom methodologies on test scores. One hundred seventy-one banking employees were trained in one, or a combination of all three of the following communication skills: oral communication, written communication, and/or interpersonal communication. Subjects were further divided into two time blocks: ten hours of training or twenty hours of training. Training was one hour per week throughout the ten or twenty week period. The Nelson-Denny Reading test and the Dailey Business English test were used pre and post training. Manova and post-hoc procedures indicated that the Executive Coaching methodology produced five scores significantly higher than the Small Group and the Classroom methodologies. One score was higher for the Small Group methodology over the Classroom treatment. All results were at the .01 level of significance. No significant results were found for the CBT or the Classroom treatment groups. These results imply that, of the four methodologies studied, the best methodology to use would be the Executive Coaching methodology.

Much research has been conducted measuring the benefits of individual tutoring in the school age child population (Cohen, 1982). No research compared individual tutoring, also known as Executive Coaching, to other methodologies with an adult, actively employed, subject group. Gordon, et.al. (1991) examined the small group methodology with adults (three to six subjects) but they did not compare this methodology to any other method and their work was not conducted as empirical research, thus no statistical results were reported. The rigors of this current study placed subjects into one of four training methodology groups and a control group. Those methodologies were: Individual Executive Coaching (one learner), Small Group (two to three learners), Classroom (sixteen learners), and Computer Based Training-CBT-(one learner with a computer). The executive coach (trainer) and the curriculum were identical for all subjects but the CBT group, who worked independently and on their own free time. All other groups worked on the employer time. The research sought to investigate whether or not the subjects in the Executive Coaching group would score significantly higher in post-tests than the subjects in the other instructional groups. Also, would the two time blocks of ten hours and twenty hours reveal any significant differences in test scores? Prior research had not shown any significant scores in such short training times. The author expected some favorable results for the above questions because such results were discovered with school age subjects. Would these results occur with working adult subjects? These were the questions that this researcher set out to answer.

Method

Subjects

There were a total of 171 participants who were selected because of their communication needs and because they were high-potential employees of a large Midwestern bank. The demographic characteristics are contained in table one.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics

Category	Sub-Category	Total
Gender	Female	127
	Male	44
Race	African American	99
	White	57
	Other	15
Age	Under 30	96
	30 & over	75
Tenure	Under 5 yrs.	85
	Over 5 yrs.	86
Job Grade	Grade 15-19	117
	Grade 20 & over	55
Education	High School	37
	Jr. College	70
	Bachelor & above	64

Table two contains the distribution of subjects by goal categories. This table excludes the control group and the CBT group. A subject chose the oral communication goal if his or her oral product was deficient in some way. The oral business standard is stated as follows: when one speaks as a representative of the company, whether in a formal presentation or in a phone conversation, there will be no error in sound or grammar. An employee chose the written communication goal if his or her written product was deficient. The business written standard states that when one publishes a written document, hard copy or electronic, there will be no errors in style or grammar. A subject chose the interpersonal goal if his or her interpersonal relationship skills were deficient and unproductive in some noticeable manner as judged by the subject and the supervisor.

Table three contains the division of subjects by teaching methodology. Table four contains the time category distribution. These numbers exclude the control group.

Table 2. Learning Goal Summary

Goal	N	%
Oral & Written	51	37
Interpersonal	53	38
All 3 above	34	25
Total	138	100

Table 3. Subjects by Methodology

Methodology	N
Executive Coaching	67
Small Group	44
Classroom	29
CBT	11
Control	20
Total	171

Table 4. Subjects by Time Category

Time	N
10 hours	72
20 hours	49

Testing Instruments

Each subject was administered pretests and posttests. These tests were the Nelson-Denny reading test and the Dailey Business English Test. The Nelson-Denny measures reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge. The Dailey Test measures the knowledge of grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. In addition, a skill rating was obtained from each subject, as well as from each supervisor, that produced a pre-training and a post-training score. Thus fifteen dependent variable scores were obtained in all.

Procedure

Each subject experienced three hours of assessment activity prior to the training sessions. These assessment sessions lasted for one hour per week for three weeks. The actual training lasted for one hour per week for either ten weeks or for twenty weeks. In the first assessment meeting the instructor established the learning atmosphere for the learner. Demographic and job related data were collected. The learner and the instructor discussed the exact nature of the skill deficiency. If the client was seeking an oral communication goal, this first assessment session was audio taped to obtain an audio/sound sample of the subject's voice. This tape was listened-to and analyzed by the subject and the instructor in later learning sessions. The second assessment hour involved the administration of the standardized tests. In the third assessment meeting the instructor and the subject discussed the test results and the exact goal of the learning. Near the end of this third hour the subject's supervisor joined the meeting to discuss the goal and to offer any learning assistance to the employee, outside of the learning sessions. Once the assessments were completed, the training was scheduled to begin.

Treatment Conditions

The Executive Coaching methodology consisted of individual training (one-to-one) of content regarding the desired goal. The Small Group methodology consisted of the instructor working with three individuals whose goals were the same. The content was identical. The Classroom methodology consisted of 15 learners whose goals also matched. The CBT group members began and ended their training on their own without any active monitoring by the instructor. This group was simply pretested and

posttested using the standardized tests. The CBT content consisted of 45-minute computer modules on the subject of business writing. These modules were taken during the employees' own time, not during company paid time.

Flow of the Sessions

For the Executive Coaching and the Small Group methodologies, subjects met with the instructor for one hour per week. The content of a session involved curriculum based on the needed goal. Homework was corrected. A new lesson plan was performed and time was allotted for skill practice. Then homework was assigned for the next session. The flow of the Classroom methodology sessions tended to be more lecture and drill practice and less individualized dialogue between the learner and the instructor than other methods because of the 15-student class size.

Results

The following results were obtained. All scores were significantly higher in the posttest than in the pretest, regardless of the treatment conditions, as indicated in tables five and six. To avoid statistical redundancy the tables include eight scores of interest. The score abbreviation explanation is as follows:

VR = vocabulary raw score
VG = vocabulary grade equivalency
CR = comprehension raw score
CG = comprehension grade equivalency
RR = reading rate raw score
BR = business English raw score
SR = supervisor rating
ER = employee self-rating

Four scores were significant by treatment group. These were the Reading rate score, the reading percentile score, the supervisor rating score and the employee self-rating score. One score, the employee self-rating , was significant by goal category. Of all treatment groups, the Executive Coaching group was statistically significant in five comparative instances. That is to say that the Tutored group showed significance over the Small Group method in three scores and the Tutored group showed significance

Table 5. Scores with univariate statistics N=169

Score	Mean sq.	F	Sig.	Power
VR	12921.72	253.57	.000	1.000
VG	245.715	199.67	.000	1.000
CR	4557.77	81.61	.000	.042
CG	277.94	73.88	.000	.781
RR	86639.8	32.46	.000	1.000
BR	3800.75	92.64	.000	1.000
SR	88.13	59.96	.000	1.000
ER	8.89	9.29	.000	.982

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics

Score	Pretest mean	Std. deviation	Posttest mean	Std. deviation
VR	50.74	22.69	54.22	22.59
VG	12.79	3.24	13.33	3.15
CR	39.98	14.57	45.57	14.71
CG	11.37	3.80	12.64	3.68
RR	234.18	70.77	240.42	75.28
BR	75.33	12.91	76.76	13.24
SR	3.92	1.40	6.94	1.65
ER	4.58	1.38	7.87	1.03

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over the Classroom group in two scores. As for the other methodologies, The Small group was significant for one score over the Classroom group. That score was the Supervisor rating. Neither the Classroom methodology group nor the CBT group showed any comparative scores that were statistically significant.

Discussion

The Executive Coaching learning atmosphere proved to be the winning environment for adults in this study. It produced the highest number of statistically significant test scores compared to all other methodologies. The Small Group atmosphere proved to be the second best one compared to the classroom setting and the CBT methodology.

The two time dimensions did not result in any significant scores. When all time blocks were averaged, however, the average total learning time was 12.6 hours. That is to say that the typical adult learner in this study experienced 12.6 hours of instruction to achieve his/her learning goals and to obtain statistically significant posttest scores in all of the dependent variables. This is the shortest amount of time recorded in any prior research that had reported statistical results. Dinges (1974) reported grade level gains of 1.9 years and 2.7 years with a group of ten adults. These results occurred after 75 hours of individual tutoring. Gordon, et.al. (1990, 1991) reported non-significant score gains at 30 hours of small group tutoring. Thus, the nearest training time reported to this current study was 30 hours. This study achieved significant scores in 12.6 hours. This represents quite a difference from prior research.

Another result was that the Employee self-rating score (ER) was significant by race. This score was a self-evaluation that was performed after the training event. All subjects were asked to rate their skill on their goal before the training and after the training; thus the ER pretest and posttest scores were obtained. The learners were asked to rate their skill on a scale of 1 to 10: 1 being low and 10 being high. All subjects produced an ER score. The African American subjects rated themselves as having experienced significantly more skill gain after the training than the White employees rated themselves. The Anova pretest results and the Anova posttest results revealed that whites scored significantly higher than blacks. However, when the posttest scores were compared to the pretest scores by use of the Manova procedure-when the gain scores were compared by racial groups-the gain

scores of white subjects were not higher than the gain scores of black employees. These results seem to indicate that both racial groups evaluated themselves as lacking in the skill goal that the training intervention sought to achieve. After the training, the Black employees believed that they had closed their skill gaps far more significantly, statistically, than the White employees' estimation of their own skill gain. Another way to state this is that Black employees believed that they had a wider skill gap to overcome than White employees and that the Blacks perceived that they did overcome the gap. This result was not expected in the research project.

The supervisor rating score (SR) was obtained in a similar manner to the way that the ER score was obtained. After the training was completed, the individual's supervisor was asked to rate the subject's skill on the same scale idea as before: from 1 to 10; 1 being low and 10 being high. Thus the supervisor produced an estimation of the skill before the training began and again after the training was completed. The statistical results, reported above, revealed that the SR score was significant for the Small Group methodology subjects over the Classroom subjects. The supervisors had employees in all methodologies. The significant SR score could mean that when the SR gain scores for the Small Group atmosphere were compared to the SR gain scores of the Classroom method, the supervisors noticed more gain in the skills of the Small Group employees than in the skills of the Classroom group, back on the job.

The Classroom groups had all three goals. Most Small Groups had one goal. This fact may have impacted the supervisor's scores because in the small group settings there were less goals than in the Classroom groups. Although the classroom time blocks were all up to 20 hours of training, this factor may have equalized the one-goal/three goal difference between groups.

In conclusion, The Executive Coaching methodology proved to be a viable methodology in which to train adults. Further research can be performed to study why this methodology seems to produce such significant gains in a short period of time. Could these results be due to the talents of the coach? Could the results be due to the personalized curriculum aimed exactly at each learner's specific deficiency? Could the results also be due to the Executive Coaching atmosphere, an atmosphere devoid of the possible embarrassment and pressure of the presence of other learners? The pursuit of the answers to these questions can provide robust future research to help all adult educators understand just what may be the inner dynamics of this one-to-one methodology that makes it such a powerful and productive learning atmosphere for adults as well as for children.

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